

ARTICLE IV.

THE WOMEN OF ITALY.

From the Foreign Quarterly Review, October, 1841.

La Donna Saggia ed Amabile. Libri Tre di Anna Pepoli, Vedova Sampieri. Capolago, Tipografia Elveica. 1838.

If it were always permitted to draw an obvious inference from the most irrefutable precedents, without incurring the sneers of skepticism, we might almost venture to affirm that the days of man upon earth are drawing to a close, and that the long-dreaded millennium is at hand.

Yet a few more efforts of mechanical ingenuity and the plough will ride unguided over the field like a railway train, steamers will glide like ducks over the waters without noise or smoke, and balloons will be curbed and bridled like Ariosto's hippogriffs.

Already the influence of climate has been utterly neutralized. Our coal has been made to answer all the purposes of an Italian sun. It has all its warmth, its light, its life. England has become the metropolis of the vegetable kingdom, and the horticultural gardens at Chiswick are the flora of both continents. A shop in Regent street has been turned into nature's own workshop, exhibiting within its genial temperature all the mysteries of an artificial maternity. Mr. Espy of Philadelphia has thrown his spell over the storms and offers to sell rain by the bucket to the highest bidder. In short, it will go hard with us if, ere we are many years older, we do not see the isthmuses of Suez and Panama cut through, a rail-road tunnel driven through the bowels of the Alps, and a suspension-bridge launched across the Atlantic.

Then will there be rest for man and beast. Then will men grow weary of watching with folded arms the progress of their self-acting tailoring apparatus, and, impatient of a state of inactivity inconsistent with their nature, they will, like Alexander, complain that their fathers left nothing for them to do, and look out for another world, the earth being much too narrow for them.

Nor do we hesitate to affirm that the moral improvement of the human race has kept pace with physical discovery. The teetotallers strive boldly to undo the work of Noah. Wilberforce has raised the patriarch's curse from the heads of the devoted children of Canaan; the peace-societies hope to rivet the sword of war to its scabbard and to turn all the nations of the earth into a vast Quaker community. Reason and justice are soon to obtain an undisputed ascendancy over force. The Russians will be made to feel the propriety of withdrawing from Poland, the Austrians will suffer themselves to be talked out of Italy. The French are raising

a Chinese wall round Paris, to save them the trouble of fighting for their country. All ancient grievances will be amicably settled. All nations will vie with each other in forgetting old grudges, and redressing time-sanctioned injustices. But the most natural as well as the most glorious result of this voluntary abnegation of the right of the strongest will be the cessation of an abuse of power as ancient as Eden, a revolution to be operated by the suppression of a single word in the marriage ceremony, the rehabilitation of a much injured being into its natural rights—the emancipation of woman.

Already the champions of the trampled sex, the Chapmans and Martineaus, have unfolded the standard of independence. Having at first trained themselves to public controversy in the cause of abolitionism, they soon learnt to stand up, like Cicero, *pro domo sua*, in vindication of their inalienable right of sitting in senates and parliaments and being elbowed and squeezed on the hustings. Another more formidable combatant, the fair authoress of "Woman and her Master," after searching in the treasures of the past with unwearied diligence, has fully demonstrated that woman in all ages and countries (not excepting even such characters as Aspasia and Messalina) has been and is a middle creature between a lamb and an angel, perverted, fettered and tortured by another selfish being, half-demon, half-brute. She has raised Medea's war-cry:

πάντων δ' ὅσ' ἔστ' ἔμψυχα, καὶ γνώμην ἔχει,
 γυναῖκες ἐσμὲν ἀθλιώτατον φυτόν.

With all our heart do we congratulate these lovely emancipators on the favorable prospect that every thing is taking before them, and wish them a speedy success in an enterprise which, as it would most powerfully contribute to bring about that new order of things, that golden age of peace and justice which has been hitherto considered incompatible with the frailty of human nature, would be the most infallible sign of the forthcoming close of time.

Female writers in England, France and America are pretty nearly a match for their male opponents, and if the sword is to be definitely laid aside and the field open for a fair and impartial discussion, we have no doubt but women will in the end talk men out of countenance. But to whatever extent these ladies may carry their female radicalism, they will easily perceive that their social reforms will not be immediately applicable to all countries alike; and as we hear every day of nations being unripe for the blessing of liberal institutions, as we see statesmen insisting on the necessity of fitting a people for better destinies by the gradual influence of civilization and culture, so it will be likewise understood that the fair sex cannot be everywhere equally ready for an immediate enfranchisement, and that, for instance, the Georgian slave of an eastern harem could not be as easily trained to take her share in the weighty deliberations of the sublime Porte, as a Yankee girl might be called to sit among the members of Congress.

These reflections were awakened in our mind at the sight of the work

of which the title stands at the head of the present article, and we were curious to ascertain what notions concerning woman's mission might be entertained by a lady born and bred up in a country in which the persons of her sex are kept in something like a middle station between oriental seclusion and—what would strike every other traveller but Miss Martineau as—the total independence of American women.

We like to look over a book written by a lady. There is, we believe, an immense tract of unknown world in the female heart; there exists between these two sexes, created so essentially to belong to and to be necessary to each other, to share all hopes and fears, all cares and enjoyments of life, a barrier of conventional dignity and propriety, of sexual etiquette, which almost every lover and husband flatters himself with removing, but which perhaps no living man ever succeeded in so doing, and which we do not know but it were perhaps unadvisable that any one should attempt to remove.

Yet it is but too natural that we should all stand on tiptoe to catch a glimpse of this *terra incognita*, and we would willingly renounce all the pleasure derivable from one of Captain Parry's voyages to the North Pole, or from an American South Sea expedition, to be enabled to overhear, without indelicacy, a conversation between two fair "bosom-friends" in some trying and unguarded moment, or to possess the key to that magic telegraph of nods and winks and smiles by which two female spirits commune with each other before company, to the utter mystification of the duller sex.

Next to this would be the other no less unhallowed gratification of intercepting one of those four-page, small-hand, close-written, cross-lined feminine epistles, to the uninitiated conveying scarcely any meaning at all, but where, in every turning in every letter, the corresponding parties are enabled to decipher so much "more than meets the eye."

Next to this, again, is the pleasure of perusing the works of a female author; for although the fair writer, knowing that her page is to stand the full glare of broad daylight, may be constantly on her guard lest she should by any involuntary indiscretion jeopardize the secret interests of the community, yet some unlucky expression, some half-word may, in the heat of inspiration, happen to drop from her pen, which will shoot like wild-fire across the benighted understanding of a man who *can* read, and do more than an age of learning towards his initiation into the mysteries of female freemasonry.

Of these voluntary confessions and involuntary revelations, thanks to heaven, in our own country, we have enough; and the new novels and essays by ladies, misses and mistresses, issuing every year from the English press, bid fair to leave scarcely one fold of the female heart unexplored, scarcely one blush of the maiden's cheek unaccounted for.

But if this be the case in Old and New England as well as in France and Germany, the same can hardly be said of the Italian peninsula, where, with the exception of a very few Petrarchesque poetesses, and a still fewer moral ascetic writers, man seems still almost completely to monopolize the trade of book-making.

For this apparent sterility of the female mind in the land of Vittoria Colonna and Olympia Morata, it would not perhaps be difficult to adduce many important reasons. But the most insurmountable obstacle against female authorship lies in the deep-rooted antipathy, or, if we must call it so, prejudice of the people of that country against any attempt on the part of a woman to call upon herself the gaze of the multitude or court notoriety.

The Italians, a highly sensitive and cultivated nation, are as far from grudging the tender and timid creatures whom they associate with their destinies through life, the advantages of a liberal education, as any other people can well be; but a fond notion—may be a mistaken one—prevails among them that all a lady's accomplishments and acquirements should be exclusively consecrated to enliven that little domestic circle which she is called to bless with her presence. Hence an authoress, no less than an actress or an *improvisatrice*, is for them an anomaly, an exceptionable being who has cast aside all the delicacy, grace and modesty which constitute the peculiar charm of her sex, and thereby foresworn its inalienable privileges and rendered herself liable to the disrespect of the other.

Female authorship in Italy is looked upon as a kind of moral hermaphroditism; nor would the high station and still higher character, the noble and irreprehensible life of the lady whose name graces this page, have secured her against the sneering comments of her jealous countrymen, had she not made choice of that only subject which exclusively belonged to one of her sex—the illustration of the domestic and social virtues which ought to characterize “a wise and amiable woman,” and the degree of moral and intellectual distinction to which it is not only lawful but even desirable that she should aspire.

Anna, Countess Pepoli, and widow of the Marquis Sainpieri—for her titles, according to the Italian custom, are carefully omitted in the title-page,—belongs by birth to one of the most ancient and illustrious historical families of Bologna. Her brother, Count Carlo Pepoli, already well known to the republic of letters as the author of the melodrama “*I Puritani*” and other poems, is an exile from his native country, and belongs to ours for various reasons, because he fills the chair of Professor of Italian Literature in London University College, and because he evinced his preference in favor of our ladies by choosing a bride among the daughters of Albion.

The Countess Anna has been a wife and a mother, and it was only after having performed her uxorial and maternal duties in a manner that won her the admiration and esteem of all who knew her, after having trusted to another the happiness of the only daughter, whom she had brought up with all the solicitude of love, that she endeavored to draw up a theory of those countless and nameless cares by which woman can make a heaven of a husband's home, and indemnify the world for the unavoidable, however remote, contingency of her loss, by leaving behind her what has been not unaptly called “a second edition of self.”

But besides her desire of communicating to her countrywomen all that her own experience had taught her respecting the duties of woman

as a housekeeper (*reggitrice*), or as an instructress (*educatrice*) and as a social being (*donna conversevole*), the countess harbored in her bosom a higher object, common in Italy to every person who thinks or feels no less than to all who write, that of vindicating the women of Italy "from the unjust judgment" and "false accusations" brought against them by partial or prejudiced foreigners; the rehabilitation of the national character being the aim of the most anxious endeavors of every generous soul that lives between the Alps and the sea.

Certainly this plea in favor of the national character is neither uncalled for nor inopportune; for the Italians write comparatively little, and that little must undergo the ordeal of a most odious censorship, which scruples not to proscribe even the most harmless book, under no other pretext than that it bears the obnoxious name of Italy and Italians; so that even the work that we have undertaken to examine, holy and pure as its subjects may appear to us, and meek, gentle and moderate the spirit in which it has been dictated, could, however, only be printed at Capolago, in Switzerland, and on its first appearance in the papal states was put to the Index, seized upon, and subjected its authoress to endless petty annoyances and vexations on the part of his holiness's government.

That the character of the Italians has been wilfully misrepresented by ignorant travellers, who have hurried through the country under the influence of illiberal prepossessions, is a fact sufficiently demonstrated by the more mature and rational reports of other visitors, who had leisure to ground their estimate on a closer observation and a more intimate acquaintance. We do not believe that those writers have any wish or interest to be unjust to other nations, but the poor honest Milanese, or light-hearted Florentine who happens to read a smuggled French or English newspaper, or a stray volume of a novel where it is unblushingly stated that "Italian life is a mass of rottenness and corruption," that "every man is there a swindler, every woman a wanton," (we quote at chance from a leading article in the "*Britannia*" newspaper,) must be sympathized with, if taking such compliments literally and supposing such uncharitable animadversions to be implicitly relied upon abroad, he feels sore and bitter on the subject, and considers himself bound to seize every opportunity to stand forth as his country's sworn champion and advocate.

We shall be always willing to open in these pages a list where such national contests may be fought on equal ground; and our duties to the sex no less than our sense of right are equally engaged to allow the Countess Pepoli to plead in favor of a class of women, of whom her virtues no less than her rank have made her one of the brightest ornaments, and upon whose morals her book is likely to exercise the most pious and salutary influence.

We need scarcely repeat here the well-known maxim that woman is invariably such as man wishes her to be; that the female mind and heart are moulded according to the ideas prevailing in the society in which she is brought up, and that, by a natural reaction, she exercises an equal ascendancy over society itself, that as she is physically a daughter and a

mother, so is she by turns also a pupil and a mistress; so that her sex may always be taken as a fair representative of the moral standard reached by the human family in all ages and countries.

In proportion, therefore, as our authoress succeeds in demonstrating how far her countrywomen have attained a high degree of feminine excellence, so shall we feel inclined to judge more or less favorably of the morals of the nation at large; and every proof she may be able to bring forward in support of her subject will have the force of a hundred arguments in refutation of the charges brought against the Italian name.

Meanwhile, since men are willing in our days to lay so great a stress on the philosophy of language, we deem it worth our while to study the sex in a country, whose tongue has no such word as *woman*, the only analogous appellation being "*Donna*," a corruption of the Latin *Domina* or *Domna* (lady), which is still equally applicable to a female of the lowest order, to the proudest matrons in the land, and even to the worshipped "Queen of the Angels."

The work of our authoress seems from its very beginning calculated to overthrow our long cherished ideas of Italian female education. No mention of convents is made. That strict rule of monastic seclusion to which every young lady of high rank was almost universally supposed to be condemned in Catholic countries, there to be walled up in a narrow cell, only to pass from the silence and solitude of the cloisters, to the glare and bustle of the wide world, affianced to a husband, whose very portrait she had never seen—we know that many of our readers will be astonished and scandalized to hear it—is neither better nor worse than one of the thousand and one absurd fables by which Italian life is rather romantically than veritably represented.

Countess Pepoli does not inquire into the good or evil effects of monastic education. She does not advocate or inveigh against the system. She seems not even to suspect, to dream of its existence; belonging by birth to, and moving all her life among the highest circles, she knows very well that neither herself nor her daughter, nor any of her friends, at least since the days of Napoleon, ever set their foot within the precincts of a nunnery, except only those few unfortunate or perhaps deluded ones, who, either through disappointment, or dread of the world, or misunderstood devotion, are still occasionally induced to leave all their worldly hopes and anxieties with their shorn hair on its threshold.

The convent in our days,—hear it, ye gallant and compassionate champions, whose chivalrous feelings are so deeply affected as you roam around the enclosure of an Ursuline monastery, and whose imagination loves to conjure up images of loveliness as crowding those harems of the Brides of Christ,—the convent has become the refuge of shrivelled old women, and of those ill-favored creatures who are wedded to heaven in sheer despair of earthly nuptials. Those confirmed old spinsters, whom the provident English match-maker ships off by the score to India, and the American packs off to the marts of the far west, the Italian parent dooms or persuades to cloistral solitude, and this is perhaps the only earthly advantage of an institution, which the mighty will of Napoleon

had successfully uprooted, and which nothing but the narrow-minded policy of after governments would have deemed it expedient to restore.

But if the system of conventual education may be considered as utterly exploded, it cannot be denied that her mother's home has not unfrequently for an Italian young lady all the sameness and loneliness of monastic seclusion.

Female delicacy in Italy is looked upon as a pure crystal which the faintest breath of the world may contaminate. It is a sweet, tender flower, equally dreading the scorching meridian ray and the blast of the northern gale. The Italians believe in a virginity of the soul, without which personal chastity has hardly any value in their eyes. To secure this moral innocence, and here perhaps is their main error, they know no better means than an almost entire abstraction from, and ignorance of, the world. The independence of a Yankee girl,—we make use of that obnoxious denomination, not through disrespect for the “smartest nation in creation,” but better to designate the people of New England, that part of the United States where American manners are most characteristically developed,—begins with the earliest stage of boarding-school life. Early in the morning she walks out alone, sometimes for a distance of miles, to her academy; who her tutors and companions, what her studies, what books she reads, what friendships or habits she contracts, her parents scarcely ever care to inquire; or if asked, scarcely ever does she condescend to reply. In proportion as she grows, more completely and absolutely does she acquire the mastery over her own actions. She chooses her dancing and music masters, her congregation, her minister. She subscribes to cotillion parties, shines off at a fancy fair or at a flower auction. She walks home late at night from a rout with her favorite partner, and takes a long tour by moonlight to enjoy the coolness and sentimentalism of the night air. She introduces her male friends to her mother, and sends out her invitations to tea without consulting the “old lady;” finally, she informs her parents that her lover has “popped the question,” unless indeed she prefers the éclat and excitement of a runaway match. And yet this unbounded latitude is scarcely ever attended with mischievous results. Thanks perhaps to natural coldness of temperament, or to the early marriages which in those wide-spreading colonies are and will long continue to be the order of the day, the American young lady very early acquires the *calculating* habits of the country. She is her own *duenna* and *chaperon*. Her fancy and heart are always under the control of reason. She learns to value her admirers according to their *worth*. You never hear of a *faux-pas*, or if you do, you may be sure that all worldly advantages have been duly weighed, and that even that apparent imprudence is the result of the most consummate policy. Before she leaves school, a Yankee girl—God bless her!—has a thorough knowledge of the world. She is up to every trick, secure against all dangers of amorous seduction. Else, what were the good of the million of novels she reads? Her look is proud and daring; her step firm and secure. With her, as with the Spartan virgin,

E' la vergogna inutile
Dov' è la colpa ignota.

Modesty she would look upon as a want of sincerity and frankness ; delicacy as a lack of spirit and independence. With the exception of a few luckless words, which her nice notions of decency have proscribed from the English dictionary—for a list of them vide Sam Slick—there is scarcely a subject of conversation which she would dream of rebuking or discountenancing.

In presence of her betrothed or her husband she launches forth in the most transcendent expressions of admiration for another. Her hand and person are the exclusive possession of one man, but she is perfectly free to fancy whom she pleases *ad outrance*. She is a coquette upon principle, and she delights in wanton but unmeaning flirtations, merely to test the endurance of the man of her choice, and assert, to its full extent, her own independence.*

Having still a queen at the head of our nation, as well as a national church and aristocracy, we cannot boast of going the whole length of American freedom. Our English girls are made sometimes to remember that they *have* a mother. If not absolutely under the sway, they are still at least under the guidance of their natural guardians. They have got eyes, and are permitted to make use of them ; a taste, and they are free to exercise it ; a heart, and we let them believe that it is theirs to bestow. Truly this liberty exists rather in words than facts. The tether is long and loose, but we never let it entirely slip from our hands ; our daughters have the motion of their marriage bill, but we reserve the enactment for ourselves. We do not control their inclinations, but reason them out of them. We do not crush their feelings, but tamper with them. We do not thwart their love, but awaken their ambition. We do not present them the alternative between an old husband and a convent—God forbid ! we only bid them choose between a young gallant and a coronet. They are not dragged like victims to the altar, oh no ! they are driven to church in glittering carriages, decked out with jewels and garlanded with flowers.

An Italian mother—we speak of the ladies of the old school, since Countess Pepoli seems to entertain more liberal ideas—can be contented with nothing short of making herself the gaoler of her daughter. The poor girl must grow up in her parent's bower like a sweet rosebud hidden beneath a bush of thorns, like a gem buried in the depths of the ocean. She is never lost sight of for a moment ; never opens a book, never converses with any living being without her guardian's knowledge and consent. Are visitors announced ? she is bidden to withdraw. Is mamma going to the opera ? she is ordered to bed. The slightest outburst of passion or enthusiasm is visited with a frown. Every thing is studied to guard her against sudden impressions. Her friends are in a constant dread of her southern susceptibility. Her heart is a little half-

* This picture of the independence of Yankee girls and women, our New England readers will perceive, is somewhat over-wrought. There is perhaps, however, enough of truth in it to suggest a useful hint in respect to American female education and manners, in some quarters. SR. ED.

smothered volcano, which causes them endless anxiety. All her mother is able to teach, the girl must learn from her. If other instructors are required, females are preferred to male teachers, old to young. In all cases the mother is in constant attendance. All this not only lest the silly inexperienced young creature should set off one fair morning with her dancing-master, bound upon what is called in this country "a walk to Kensington Gardens;" but in order to prevent even the possibility of ever conceiving a passing desire of so doing.

The greatest pride of a matron's heart consists in offering her daughter to her chosen lord as perfectly new to all tender sensations as the babe unborn. By such a cautious and watchful system of domestic policy the mother flatters herself to have provided for her daughter's felicity. The intended husband is almost the first man with whom she is brought into close intimacy. Her little heart is a blank, upon which every image can be with equal facility engraved. She has no dangerous comparison before her eyes. Her affections, her ideas, her very curiosity have been hitherto concentrated upon the very few persons constituting her domestic circle. Her feelings have gained in intensity what they have lost in extent and variety. Her husband is almost materially sure to obtain her first love, and it entirely depends upon his own conduct to secure her last.

We would not confidently bring forward this as the most perfect system of feminine education; its faults and imperfections are obvious enough, nor indeed do we believe that it is always followed to the letter even in Italy. Still the leading idea of every instructress in that country seems to consist in guarding a youthful mind from pollution, by removing it as far as practicable from the tainted atmosphere of society.

It is not difficult to perceive that such is the main object even of Countess Pepoli's directions to her "educatrice." That part of her work which relates to educational purposes seems to us by far the most interesting and commendable. We have seen nowhere a more perfect exhibition of the beau-ideal of a mother instructress. Never was a theory of sound and practical moral education more discerningly and satisfactorily traced out. True to the national feeling, she does indeed recommend a constant solicitous vigilance of the mother over every step, every thought of her child. She evinces the same anxious apprehensions of the natural combustibility of Italian young blood, and is equally liberal of her warnings against the chances of its sudden ignition:—but her guardianship is one purely of confidence and love. The mother's security is to be grounded entirely on an unceasing interchange of social sympathy. She is to leave nothing unattempted to win her daughter's friendship and devotion. Mother and child must be necessary to each other, indivisible in their graver as well as in their lighter pursuits. The girl must feel that she is never left to herself, not because she is by any means mistrusted, but only because her mother loves her too well to be able to spare her company. She is not bidden to stifle every sentiment in her heart, but she is taught to let her mother into its inmost core. She is not rigidly kept aloof from society—though too great a familiarity with the world is considered as equally baneful to the purity of her mind and injurious to the spotlessness

of her character,—but she is to feel the propriety, the reasonableness, the blessing of never appearing in public without her tutelar angel. She is in fact to be a prisoner, but utterly unconscious of confinement, unable to look beyond the golden bars of her dungeon without an indefinable awe and misgiving, and incapable of dreaming of her emancipation consistently with her security and happiness. In the like manner we have seen well-trained canary birds stopping on the unclosed door of their cage, as if afraid of the dreariness of the open air and loth to quit the comforts of their love-nurtured captivity.

Thus we think it would prove rather amusing to British readers, to see with what warmth and earnestness our fair authoress admonishes every loving mother to keep a sharp look out and trust no person—“*e sia oculata e diffidi di tutti; di tutti*”—adding, however, that she must so contrive that her mistrust and suspicion be never perceived; with what rigidity she proscribes novels and all other writings calculated to pervert a young mind by amorous extravagances—“*non concedere alla figliuola la lettura d’ogni romanzo o d’altri libri chee pervertono l’immaginazione con amorosi vaneggiamenti*”—alluding especially to “those pestiferous works of fiction, which late in the eighteenth and during the present century are sent by hundreds from ‘*oltremonti ed oltremare*’ to pervert Italian manners, already so deplorably corrupted;” exception being made only in favor of those “stupenduous creations” of Walter Scott and a few others in that style, which the countess expressly and strenuously advocates. These cares and solitudes redouble when “the girl has reached that age in which duty and expediency equally demand that she should be produced into society.” Then, indeed, must the mother beware of every living being, “not excepting even her best friends, especially female friends;” she must, we are taught, “keep close to her daughter,” and at every rout or ball be sure that her eye constantly watches all her movements, “nothing being more shocking than to see a girl dancing or waltzing in one room, whilst the mother sits down at her rubber in another.”

Such are the ideas of a lady who, on every other subject, appears to be so very far from harboring bigoted scruples or illiberal prejudices, but who, on this delicate point, can but write under the influence of that southern delicacy and susceptibility, not to say jealousy and suspiciousness, which seems to crowd the social world with myriads of phantoms and monsters, from which a tender, unsophisticated mind, even if it escape without serious hurt, may perhaps not come off without some of those slight scratches and bruises, which,—as an Italian woman is understood to love only once, and that for life,—may be left to smart and bleed for an incalculable length of time. In short, a girl in her teens is not in that country thought to be possessed of sufficient discernment to guard her against the suddenness and impetuosity of her own inclinations, and as these may fatally be found at variance with the views that her best friends entertain as to her worldly preferment, her mother’s arms are to be thrown around her, so as to shield her against all untoward impressions, which, by rousing unjustifiable desires and expectations, may lead to nothing but disenchantment and misery.

A strong *sense of duty* in England, and a *calculating spirit* in America, may no doubt induce our young ladies to acquiesce in their parents' disposition as efficiently as the most rigid and watchful chaperonship; but whilst we limit ourselves to provide our daughters with fit weapons to spurn and overcome seduction, the more wary Italians secure them even against the dangers of temptation, and spare them the pangs of a struggle.

One only exception occurs in this universal monopoly which a mother is expected to exercise over all her daughter's thoughts and feelings, and that one is made in favor of her spiritual adviser. From every line in her book, from the candor and purity which transpires in every thought it contains, it very evidently results that the Countess Pepoli is deeply penetrated with a sentiment of true piety. But were it even otherwise, we feel assured that she could not in Italy safely venture to declare against either any of the tenets or the forms of worship of the established church. Religion is there considered as one of the best outward signs of feminine gentleness. The most daring skeptic, the most obdurate unbeliever of an Italian university, could not look without disgust and abhorrence on a female freethinker; nor, we are sure, could either Countess Pepoli or any of her countrywomen believe in the existence of such a one of their sex, as we have all seen travelling from town to town in America, followed by wondering crowds, as a professed apostle of infidelity.

Hence an Italian husband, whatever the bias of his own mind in relation to religious matters, is always fain to allow his wife and all the female part of his domestic community to follow the dictates of the church, to observe all its ceremonies and festivities, and even goes the whole length of allowing another man to search into those inmost recesses of his wife's heart, from which he himself, her paramount lord and master, no less than her truest friend and counsellor, is often excluded. Hence travellers have been surprised to see the Catholic churches on the continent almost exclusively frequented by females, as if woman alone, in her meekness and gentleness, felt still the need of her Creator's protection; and, however modern philosophy may have thinned the confessional of one half of its customers, it is still, and will long continue to be, knelt to by fair penitents.

In compliance with this, which we do not hesitate to call one of the most fatally absurd practices of Catholicism, even a mother does not consider herself a competent guide of her daughter's conscience, and willingly resigns her parental authority to a man, who, she thinks, by the sacredness of his ministry, by his deep knowledge and long experience of human frailties, is better enabled to clear her child's doubts and scruples, and to strengthen her sense of righteousness and virtue.

Thus, after long dwelling on the necessity of giving education a thoroughly religious tendency, and with equal carefulness warning against the dangers of bigotry and hypocrisy, our authoress proceeds to give her directions as to the choice of a confessor; and so many and various are the qualities which ought to adorn this candidate for admission into the sanctuary of her daughter's soul, that we almost feel inclined to doubt whether, in the present notorious profligacy of the Catholic priesthood, the difficul-

ty of finding that *rara avis* of spiritual monitor does not amount to a plainly avowed impracticability of the system itself.

Many and grave objections have been and may be raised against this Italian method of female education. In the first place it evidently requires an entire and exclusive devotedness on the part of the mother, and indeed Countess Pepoli plainly insists on "the necessity of a total concentration of all a mother's thoughts and faculties on this foremost and holiest of her duties." Then, this rigid seclusion of the damsel must, to a great degree, unfit the bride and matron for social life, and she must, at her first outset, find herself besieged with vague apprehensions, and also encompassed with real dangers, which a previous initiation into social life might have gradually enabled her to steer through with perfect safety.

Still it cannot be denied that an essentially domestic education must necessarily engender domestic habits and tastes; that the very inexperience and helplessness of the novice in the world's ways must naturally compel her to cling to her husband for advice and support, and contribute to increase her respect, deference and affection for him.

And here the great question arises: "What is woman's mission?" For if home, husband and children, her domestic circle and her immediate friends are to be the only objects of her cares, if her influence on society is to be exercised only through the empire of affection, if she is only to be the adviser, the inciter and soother of man's passions, through the ascendancy of private, social or educational agency, then we contend that Italy—in so far at least as Countess Pepoli's precepts are literally adhered to—ought to rear up the best patterns of feminine excellence; and that if Italian women are not the most faithful wives and the wisest mothers, it must result from any other cause rather than from want or incompetency of education.

True, Lady Morgan, Mrs. Chapman, Miss Martineau, and a crowd of their disciples, protest against this illiberal limitation of a woman's faculties to what they disdainfully term "the drudgery of domestic life;" nor while the question is so warmly debated, whilst the number of their supporters and partisans are daily increasing, till a neutral tribunal is found to pronounce an impartial sentence, would we venture to declare either in favor or against them, nor pretend to affirm that a lady would prove a less delightful companion, or a less careful housekeeper, if she were heard thumping and thundering at a political *caucus*, or if she were to stop to drop in her ticket at the polls.

But, as we have hinted from the beginning, *non omnia possumus omnes*; till the Italians have been raised to the rank of free nations, it would be of little moment for them to discuss the expediency of extending their free rights of citizenship to their wives; till they have a national assembly, elections and political meetings, it were idle for them to train their daughters to be orators, electors or members of parliament. Till men themselves are allowed to aspire to public virtues, women must evidently rest satisfied with the fulfilment of private duties.

The people of Italy seem certainly to be well acquainted with the peculiar qualities in which their women excel. "*Donna Tedesca*," says

their quaint old proverb, "*buona per la casa ; Donna Francese buona per la conversazione*,"—we trust they will soon add, "*Donna Inglese buona per la politica ;*" and after thus having yielded to the women of Germany the superiority in the management of the household, to the Parisian ladies the charms of conversational powers, they conclude, "*Donna Italiana buona per gli affetti*," usurping for their own fair partners the privilege of a more tender sensibility and a more ardent soul.

The ideas developed by our fair author on this subject seem to a certain degree in unison with the popular feelings. She plainly acknowledges an intellectual as well as a physical superiority of our sex to hers. "And, on the very outset," she says, "I am fain to confess that I do not deem women to equal men in strength of intelligence and soundness of judgment; on the contrary, I feel how widely nature has placed them above us." Again she consecrates a whole chapter to prove "*che la donna non deve ingerirsi delle cose spettanti al governo ;*" that woman has no right to meddle with politics; all which would sound to the ears of our emancipators like blasphemy and high treason. But it is quite evident that the "new light" has not yet dawned over Italy, and that woman there, strong of her *moral influence*, has not yet aspired to the acquirement of *legal power*.

The education of women in Italy is then still eminently domestic and feminine. Boarding-schools and young ladies' academies are yet far from being the same flourishing institutions as they are with us; and even our countess, while she seems to approve of colleges and universities for boys, on account of their levelling spirit, of the early development of character, of the knowledge of self and of the world, naturally arising from the bustle and attrition of a public school, insists that, whoever may be called in to adorn their minds with accessory accomplishments, the mother alone should be charged with the moral education of girls, and that an early contact and acquaintance with society, even if not pernicious, would be at least useless to her whose whole world is to be limited to a narrow circle of acquaintance, and to the precincts of home.

But are then the women of Italy as pure and chaste, are they as true to their domestic mission, are they as good wives and mothers as such a social system would seem to imply? This is altogether a different and indeed a most complicate and insoluble question. If we were to collect the votes of all the rival nations, especially if we were to consult the writings of the most popular authors among the Teutonic races, we are afraid that the verdict would not be greatly in their favor. But we must make some allowance for the inevitable misunderstanding of national antipathies. The French take their standard of Italian women from Catherine or Mary de Medici. What if the Italians were to judge of German women from Caroline of Naples or Maria Louisa of Parma? The English traveller forms his estimate of Italian female character from the mock countesses the *Cameriere* offers to introduce to him. What if an Italian were to draw his knowledge of English ladies from the painted damsels that are to be seen after dusk rustling in silk and velvet in Regent-street?

Nothing is more apt to lead into error than to generalize on individu-

al observation. Why should Mrs. H—— be an exception among English, and Countess Confalonier an anomaly among Italian ladies? Till the day of her elopement the first was not suspected to be any worse, till her husband's arrest the latter was not thought to be any better, than the generality of their countrywomen. Man is but a creature of circumstance. The temptation which led a respected mother astray from the path of duty to which she had strictly adhered until that period, and the domestic calamity which called into action the unsuspected energies of a young and timid bride, are neither unexampled nor yet impossible occurrences.

Walter Savage Landor has said that it would be difficult to find an honest man in Italy for every forty in England. A bold and gratuitous assertion! Nor do we know on what statistics of probity it is grounded. But he adds soon after, that one Italian is worth all the forty honest English together. All which only tends to demonstrate that human nature in Italy is equally susceptible of the highest moral excellence and of the utmost depravity. Again it has been justly remarked, that nowhere are such startling specimens of human deformity, such horrid old hags, to be met with as among the lowest classes at Rome or Naples; but it has also been granted, that although the average standard of beauty may be said to be higher in England, yet such patterns of perfect female loveliness are occasionally found in Italy as are not to be seen in any Christian country of Europe.

In the like manner, and by that law of consistency which nature observes in all her works, we shall expect to see the extremes of moral beauty and ugliness as frequently brought into contact, and exhibiting as striking a character now as they did in the age of Lucretia Borgia and Vittoria Colonna.

It is said with great justice that the Italians are an eminently passionate people. This word, however, has not among them the same obnoxious meaning as it has with us. True to the Greek and Latin etymology, *passione* in Italian is synonymous with feeling. Passion is for them an indispensable element of life. It indifferently leads, think they, to the noblest exploits and to the darkest enormities. Hence they cherish and foster, even though they contrive to guide it. Like good horsemen they wish their beast to proceed by bounds and capers, and indulge it in every prank and whim short of running away with them. They seem to pride themselves on the violence of their temper as we do on our self-possession and coolness. They mistrust every reasonable, as a calculating, being: "What is man," says Ugo Foscolo, "if exclusively abandoned to the control of cold reason? A villain and a base villain!" These words are a code of law for the whole nation, and every one is, like Jacopo Ortis, ready "to tear his heart from his bosom and cast it off, like an unfaithful attendant, whenever it proves slack to excitement or blunted to feeling."

An Italian woman is then a creature of passion, and, as such, equally susceptible of being led to the extremes of good and evil. As a girl, her heart's impulses are governed and kept under restraint by the mother's vigilance. When married, she is as much under her own guidance as un-

der the control of her husband. The Italians are said to make the best lovers, but the most indifferent husbands in the world. Countess Pepoli seems to hint as much. An Italian is jealous as long as he loves. His affection is selfish and exclusive. He must absorb all the faculties, engross every thought of the woman he sets his heart upon. He will shoot her favorite spaniel on his wedding day. He is a self-tormenting domestic tyrant, whom nothing short of a desert island could free from anxiety.

Happily, however, his partner is trained up to seclusion and solitude. She is fain to attribute her husband's suspiciousness and disquietude to excess of tenderness, and easily puts up with it. Indeed she is rather alarmed at the first symptoms of seriousness on the part of her jailer. An Italian woman is very fond of home. We have so very often heard of the "domestic comforts and fireside virtues of good, merry, happy old England," that we are too readily induced to believe other nations as little attached to their dwellings as the Arabs of the desert. Certainly if all ideas of home-bred felicity are to be connected with trim hearth-rugs and burnished fire-grates; if dusting, rubbing and scrubbing are to be considered as "intimately associated with and dependent upon moral feelings and habits," according to Mrs. Ellis's notions of the characteristics of the women of England, no other nation—Philadelphians and Dutch always excepted—can compete with this "favored country."

An Italian housekeeper cannot, Cornelia-like, in the pride of her heart, point to her Brussels carpets as her best jewels, nor boast of *fireside* virtues. But she looks with amazement at the crowds of home-loving daughters of Albion of every age and description, who carry abroad specimens of English manners and feelings. She stares at the swarms of Tomkins, Pumpkins and Popkins, with caravans of wives and children, nurses and infants, hurrying from town to town, like tribes of strolling gipsies with the parish beadle at their heels. She asks where are now the homes of Old England? At the crowded hotels of Brighton, or at the boarding-houses of Cheltenham? Home, indeed! Where is now the Englishwoman willing, if she can help it, to rest her head for two months under the same roof?

An Italian wife certainly prefers her terrace or balcony to the chimney corner, and a moonlight walk, or even a box at the opera, to a rubber at whist. But her home are her husband, her children, her friends, her country, and to that home she is rooted for life; for its sake she renounces even the excitement of travelling.

"Où peut on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille." Her meekness and amiability enable her to live at peace with her mother and sisters-in-law. She does not break up her husband's establishment, because his house happens to be "too near Holborn," or "on the wrong side of Oxford-street." She finds it unnecessary to dismiss her domestics at the end of every fortnight. As long as she loves and is beloved, her affection for her husband extends to his house, to every branch of his family, to his home-grown servants, to every animated or inanimated being connected with his patriarchal establishment. But will then this wonder-working love, will this transcendent adhesiveness and inhabitiveness endure for life? Were we

to venture one word on the subject, the bard of "Yankee girls" would strike up with—

"The dark Italian loving much,
But more than *one* can tell;"

a thousand sneering remarks on Italian *cicisbei* and *cavalieri serventi* would assail us on every part, and the voice of argument would be drowned by a universal charivari.

From what we have said of the nature of affections in Italy, it must be naturally inferred that they are as short-lived as they are headlong and intense. Though the Italians pride themselves not a little on their powers of endurance, and notwithstanding their darling proverb, "*Furia Francese e Costanza Italiana*," we are inclined to believe that the sameness and seclusion to which young couples, in the egotism of their happiness, improvidently condemn themselves, must have the effect of wasting in a few weeks of honeymoon ebriety the sober enjoyments of a whole life, and be attended with a satiety dangerously akin to indifference and disgust. This is, indeed, the case in every country; but the passage from the romance of hymeneal holiday to the realities of every day's life must be the more critical; the higher the pitch of illusion we had wound ourselves up to, the deeper the abyss of forgetfulness we had plunged into.

Every chance not only of domestic felicity but of sober moral conduct in Italy, depends upon the degree of rationality and resignation with which the happy lovers resume their place in society after that long entrancement of unearthly bliss. If all their store of affection has not been wantonly consumed among the extravagances of the bridal banquet, if they can contrive to live thriftily on its remains—and we believe that such is still the case with the majority if not with the generality of Italian families—all may yet be well; but in a different case, the estrangement of the lovers' minds is as complete as their union was all-absorbing; a moral divorce ensues. Legal separation being in that country prohibited both by divine and human laws, a secret compact is entered into, according to the terms of which husband and wife continue to inhabit the same house—not the same apartments if they can help it—and to keep up all the appearances of a quiet and orderly household, without in fact any but the faintest and coldest bond of friendship between them. In this agreement the young wife, who has been hitherto suffered to see as little of the world as maternal caution and foresight could contrive, who has been taught to look up to her husband alone for advice and support, finds herself suddenly, unexpectedly, mistress of her own actions, and launched into the midst of a society, every element of which seems most fatally calculated to determine her ruin.

Up to the period of the French revolution, celibacy had been in Italy the order of the day. The country was then swarming with numberless cadets, who, unable on account of their penniless condition to support a family, numbered marriage rather among the burdens than the advantages of heirship, and conspired to bring about that anomalous state of society which, under the name of *cicisbeism*, has reflected perhaps as much ridi-

culé as disgrace on their country, and which certainly gave them little reason to envy the rights and privileges of primogeniture.

Things have now indeed undergone a rapid improvement. It is no longer unblushingly asserted that it is "only the fool that marrieth," nor is a husband any longer congratulated with, or thanked for, "his devotion to the *public weal*." The code of *cicisbeism* has been abolished, if indeed it ever existed; for its institutions, like those of ancient chivalry, seem to recede in the past as we look for them, so as to render it a very difficult task to unravel the truth from the fables with which it has been interwoven. But notwithstanding the partition and equalization of property arising from the abolition of feudal laws, and the French agrarian reforms, which had the splendid result of bringing the whole nation to a happy level of beggary, many are still the Italian youths whom sheer want and dread of starvation deter from wedded life; and celibacy, if it has ceased to be a matter of fashion, is still, to a fearful extent, a measure of necessity.

Religious and political institutions also conspire to aggravate this most pernicious of moral disorders. Myriads of Catholic clergy bound by hasty vows, and thousands of officers in the vast continental armies, either prevented by law or forbidden by poverty from marrying, are let loose on a society in which the most sacred affections are for them unlawful and criminal, in which, feeling can only lead them to error, and love to liberalism.

Moreover, soldiers and priests, plebeians and nobles, all in Italy are idle;—idle less perhaps through habit and inclination than absolute necessity. The peer has no parliament to sit in, the warrior no battles to fight, the churchman only a mass *per diem* to celebrate. Commerce and trade obey the influence of this universal languor and indolence. Private exertion slackens without the stimulus of public activity, and southern life is but too easily enticed into the unlawful but heart-stirring excitement of love intrigue.

By such a crowd of wary and enterprising enemies, unrestrained by principle and skilled in the arts of seduction, the always inexperienced, often unhappy Italian wife, neglected by her husband, and fallen from all her dreams of conjugal happiness, finds herself beset on her first entrance into the world.

A French woman presiding over her husband's counting-house, an English peeress riding across the country to win electors to her husband's party, an American woman preparing her pamphlets for the "Unitarian Tract Society," may perhaps, as a man, look upon her love-romance merely as an episode in her life; but for the woman of Italy—that woman *par excellence*—love is the business of her whole existence, it is existence itself; and, in the shipwreck of her domestic affection, she must be too fatally prone to cling to the first hand that is insidiously stretched forth to her in sympathy, and to transfer to another all that treasure of love so wantonly spurned and trampled upon by its legitimate possessor.

Heaven forbid that we should be understood to bring forward these extenuating circumstances as a justification for woman's misconduct. By

thus alluding to the state of society in Italy, we mean not to palliate guilt, but to exalt virtue. The Bostonian wife, luxuriating in all the magnificent loneliness of her drawing-room, reading the last fashionable novel and indulging in fantastic but harmless dreams of fairy land, deserves commendation, no doubt, if, at the return of her husband with a company of dull, sleepy partners and brothers, who talk hardly of any thing but dollars over their tea, she has strength of mind sufficient to prevent her from looking to any of those excellent men of business for the realization of her romantic visions, and comes to the conclusion that, after all, her own husband is as good a companion as any man living; but she has hardly any idea of that militant virtue which must stand the test of long, incessant temptation, and resist the contagious force of example.

What is elsewhere only called a dutiful wife, in Italy must be a heroine; and yet the number of these heroines is greater by far than foreign travellers are willing to acknowledge, greater even than the Italians themselves seem inclined to suppose.

Against the allurements of a loose society, an Italian woman has the shield of her religious and moral principles, the constant watchfulness of her husband and all around her, and the hundred-eyed vigilance of public scandal.

Religion in Italy is omnipresent. Whatever may be said or thought of Catholic institutions, it must not be denied that that creed yields a constant, faithful support to a wavering mind. As long as frequented by a true believer,—and we have already seen that most women are so,—even confession, notwithstanding its absurdity and liability to abuse, may have the effect of giving timely warning against, and putting an end to, dangerous connections.

Again, the Italian wife, even when inclined to evil, will often be restrained by want of opportunity. Her husband, however perfectly indifferent as to the possession of her heart, is still inexorably jealous of what he calls his honor; around his lady, at every hour of the day or night are a crowd of his allies,—his mother, his sisters, and other bigoted dowagers and sour-tempered spinsters belonging to his family, and warmly attached to his interests,—who, on the first symptoms of coolness and estrangement between the parties, range themselves into a formidable array on his side, and volunteer their services as an active and sleepless domestic police.

Finally, it can only be a hopelessly abandoned woman, and dead to all feelings of feminine delicacy, that will brave the meddling and gossiping spirit prevailing in those petty Italian communities. In every small town,—and all towns in Italy are small as to notoriety,—there are its coteries of *male lingue*, idle, and generally worthless beings, whose sole business is to pry into the privacy of families, to weigh and sift their neighbor's conduct, and put the worst construction upon it. The levities of an English commoner's wife, lost as she is among the crowds of this vast metropolis, may amount to the utmost profligacy, ere they attract public attention. Likewise the gentle flirtation of a few months at a German spa, or at a southern watering place, is not likely to tell against the character of a

wandering peeress at her return. But an Italian lady is acting all her life on the same stage and before the same audience. Every word and step are malignantly commented upon by abject creatures, always willing to bring forward any momentary imprudence, as an argument in favor of their disbelief in female virtue, and who are never so happy as when they can exult at an angel's fall.

Before such a jury, it is evident that scarcely any woman's fame can escape unsullied, and it is, therefore, no wonder if those foreign observers, who grounded their judgment on the venomous report of such compilers of scandalous chronicles, have formed so unfavorable an estimate of the moral standard of woman in Italy, whilst, if they had had chivalry enough in their souls to give stoutly the lie to those vulgar defamers, and challenge them to produce proof of their vague accusations, they would, most probably, have arrived at different results.

This cause must likewise account for the fact, that even a woman notoriously pointed out as guilty of immoral conduct does not, as we say it, "lose her caste," and never, without the greatest reluctance, is excluded from society; a fact which has given rise to a notion universally cherished abroad that public opinion in Italy has no check and exercises no influence on private demeanor. The Italians know full well what value they are to set upon such idle slander; and as,—in a country where government, always apparently bent upon fostering and encouraging vice, punishes the adulteress only with three months' imprisonment, and condemns the husband who sends a challenge to her paramour, to death, or the galleys for life, such cases are seldom or never brought to court, and a wife's guilt can never be as satisfactorily proved as in our own happy land of damages and doctors' commons,—the most irreprehensible classes are always eager to discountenance imputations originating with vulgar gossip-pickers, and will rather run the chance of sheltering the real offender than suffer an innocent victim to be immolated.

This must also account for another moral phenomenon which has often struck foreign travellers, viz., that women are to be found in Italy, according to all appearance, perfect specimens of uxorial and maternal excellence, and yet designated by public rumor as the heroines of many a tale of gallantry and intrigue. An apparent contradiction which they fondly ascribe to Italian artfulness and duplicity, contrasting such a conduct with the candor and uprightness of an Englishwoman's character, who, even on the eve of yielding to irresistible temptation, finds it impossible to add simulation and hypocrisy to her disloyalty and unfaithfulness, and, heedless of the consequences it entails on her name, her family and children, resorts to a desperate, irrevocable resolution, and prefers the scandal, and, it may be also, the romance of elopement.

For so very inconsistent are the charges brought against the morals of the Italians, that they are, at once and in the same breath, declared to be, of all people in the world, the most loose and remiss in suffering themselves to be carried away by their passions, and the most perfect masters in the art of dissembling or disguising them; at once the hottest hearts and the coolest brains, at once headlong and violent, circumspect and cunning!

Would it not sound more like common sense and Christian charity to suppose that "handsome is that handsome does?" Would it not be humane and generous to estimate a woman's character rather from her deeds than from the scandal of the vulgar? Would it not be more like English justice to admit of no guilt till it is satisfactorily proved before a court of law? to hold as calumnious and apocryphal every crim. con. which has not been duly registered at doctors' commons? Do we not proceed with equal forbearance at home towards our own countrywomen? Why then not on the continent? Why not towards the women of Italy?

It is not thus, we are obliged to confess, that foreign writers are wont to deal with us. "In no region of the earth," says our fair authoress, "are so many domestic virtues to be met with as are found to adorn the women of England; nowhere is a woman more readily disposed to show her respect and deference towards her husband, or more active and industrious in ministering to his comforts, or promoting his prosperity."

This compliment,—evidently written in the style of Tacitus's golden description of the German tribes, and which we might perhaps have more unscrupulously accepted in the good old ages of the distaffs and spinning wheels,—this compliment the Italians send us in return for the many indignities heaped upon their name by our Morgans, Blessingtons, *et hoc genus omne*, it being the object of every patriotic writer in that country to raise the moral standard at home by descanting even to exaggeration upon the excellent qualities of other nations, whilst we generally seem to have done enough for the improvement of our people when we flatter ourselves that we have satisfactorily proved that we are no worse than our neighbors.

Let then a woman's heart,—exclaims Countess Pepoli at the close of a long chapter on "Friendship, Love and Coquetry,"—let a woman's heart be chaste, and her manners and thoughts be chaste; let her greatest beauty be *il Pudore*, and her greatest ornament *la Verecondia*—we are obliged to quote her original words, regretting that these sweet Latin terms have not been adopted in the English language—for if modesty and ingenuousness are, in any time in any country, the most becoming requisite of our sex, much more are such qualities desirable in the women of Italy, that by their irreprehensible demeanor they may put an end to the unfavorable opinions entertained among foreigners about their character. For who can read without sorrow and anger those books from *oltremonti*, where it is unblushingly asserted that the Italian women are loose to all incontinency, that their life is wasted among dissipations and follies, and their minds bent only on coquetry and intrigue? No doubt there is in all this exaggeration and untruth; but I hope it was reserved for our age to silence slander for ever and restore our fair name altogether.

Nor must we follow the dictates of virtue only because it is conducive to our personal welfare, because it secures the love and respect of our husbands and children and the estimation of all, but also for the sake of our own beloved though unhappy country; which, as long as it produced a race of valiant and generous men, it could also boast of giving

life to the wisest and noblest of women ; wherefore if, choosing our models among the most applauded characters of by-gone ages, we in our turn make ourselves patterns of chastity and purity, we shall leave an example which will long survive us and exercise its regenerating influence among future generations.

We say *amen* with all our heart, and since our subject has finally led us back to the work of which it was our business to give some account to our readers, we think we may venture to affirm that the Countess's precepts are amply calculated to operate a most salutary reform on the morals of a country, which, disposed as we may be in its favor, certainly admit of considerable improvement ; and we take the warm reception and speedy diffusion of her work—which, in spite of the Papal interdict, has gone through the second and third editions—as an omen of the earnest desire of the Italians for a general reform of their manners and rehabilitation of their name.

Certainly a book that may better answer the purpose of a manual for the easy exercise of all religious and moral duties of woman, in her capacities of wife and mother, that may enter with more minuteness into all the petty details of domestic economy or with more depth and sagacity into all the inmost recesses of a young heart in its earliest development, and yet with less tediousness and prolixity, is not, perhaps, easily to be found in any language. It would not be difficult to perceive, for instance, more profundity of metaphysical thought, more strength of reasoning, more conciseness and pithiness of style in an anonymous recent publication, entitled "*Woman's Mission*," and more skill in the art of writing, more ease and amenity in Mrs. Ellis's "*Women of England*;" for not women only but writers of every description in Italy seem to be laboring under a perpetual constraint, as if their rich and beautiful language were no longer sufficient and adequate to the conceptions of their thought, and all write in a sort of contorted, affected, mosaic style, as if the choice and collocation of every word were the result of a long and painful deliberation. From this affectation, laboriousness, and,—if it were not ungallant to use such an expression in reference to a lady's work,—pedantry of style, we cannot say that Countess Pepoli is always perfectly free. Luckily, however, language, in a work of that description, is an object of secondary consideration ; and as a manual of practical education, as a guide for training up "*wise and amiable women*," this volume is calculated to do more good than any of our analogous publications.

And as we confidently recommend it to those of our fair readers, to whom the wanton desire of *murdering* an Italian *caratina* has given a *smuttering* of the "*dolce Idioma*,"

Del bel paese la dove il si suona ;

and as we offer up our prayer that the work may be translated into English, we must be permitted to observe, that if such books are written, published, purchased and read, almost exclusively in Italy, whilst our circu-

lating libraries scarcely furnish us with any thing but their vile trash of sickly novels and leprous magazines, literature must indeed have lost all its influence on the progress of society, if we cannot, from such a fact, freely infer that Italy is rising from its moral degradation as fast as we are sinking lower and lower into corruption and vice.

After this, should we boast of the present, admitting even that the balance be now in our favor, with such prospects of the future before us? Shall we console ourselves with the fond notion, that whilst the continental nations theorize on moral virtues, the Briton needs only the guidance of his unerring instinct? Shall we, when we read "Jack Sheppard," and translations from "Paul de Kock," or whilst we applaud the ribaldries at the "Adelphi," console ourselves with our hypocritic "Omnia munda mundis?" Shall we say, with the old man at the Olympian games, that the Athenians can talk plausibly about virtue, but that we, the Lacedemonians, alone practise it? Shall we ever look upon a foreigner without calling him a Frenchman, and suppressing with difficulty our unchristian feelings of dislike, mistrust and inveterate rancor? Shall we say of every Italian that happens not to carry a stiletto, not to be able to sing, and to look up in our face whilst he speaks, that "we could not have thought him an Italian?" Must he take it as a compliment that we declare him to be an exception from the mass of his countrymen, and as an honor that we adopt him as our own countryman? Shall he, when asked what countryman he is, endeavor to remove sinister impressions by giving us the proverbially deprecating answer of the Lucchese show-boys: "In tutto il mondo ci sono dei buoni e dei cattivi. Son di Lucca per servirla?"
